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SUBJECT: OMAN MEDIA REACTION: SKEPTICAL ON ISRAELI INTENT; CLEAR
SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIANS

1. SUMMARY: The Omani media reacted to the latest developments in the Middle East Peace process with continued skepticism toward Israeli and U.S. efforts, along with strong rhetorical support for the Palestinian cause. END SUMMARY.

An "Ambiguous" Road to Peace

2. On January 6, private daily "al-Watan" (circulation 42,000) reported on the start of a new cycle of Israeli and American violations of the rights of the Palestinian in front of the whole world, "Is It an Initiative or Yet Another Puzzle?":

"U.S. attempts to re-launch the Mideast peace process are ambiguous despite the return of George Mitchell with new ideas... Washington is seeking to restore its image after the U.S. Administration's repeated failures in halting Israeli settlements."

Support for the Palestinians Should be Strong, Consistent

3. The state Arabic daily "Oman" (circulation 38,000) on January 11 hailed the Sultanate's firm position in supporting the Palestinians, as reflected in the speech delivered by the President of Majlis al-Shura at the Pan-Arab Parliamentarians Meeting. The paper hailed "Clear and Strong Positions in Support of Palestinian Rights":

"H.E. Sheikh Ahmed Al Esayi, President of Shura Council, stressed that Jerusalem was the capital of Palestine for many centuries and rejected decisively the Israeli attempts to hold the meeting of The General Assembly of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in the occupied city of Jerusalem. While the Omani position is clear and strong in rejecting Israeli maneuvers, it is important that all Arab countries move in a strong and consistent way to foil any Israeli plots in this regard."

Israeli Arrogance in the Service of Western Interests

14. "Al Watan" On January 11 found in the recently foiled airline bombing an example of what it sees as pervasive Israeli efforts to curry Western favor. "Gains and Interests in the Absence of Peace" said:

"Israel has always promoted itself as the servant of the West's higher interests in its battles against Communism, Islam, or other world conflicts. Israeli service to Western interests also involves the recent attempted plane bombing. According to "Haaretz," an Israeli company provides security services in many international airports, including the Netherlands, France, Britain, Spain, Hungary, Romania, and Russia. It promotes itself as capable of preventing terrorism more than Europeans and Americans themselves. Since Israel now controls the ports of the most important parts of the world, which garners them European and American confidence, it

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is easy for them to be arrogant and refuse peace or any peaceful solutions with Arabs."
Schmierer